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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/19146>

DOI: 10.4000/critiquedart.19146

ISBN: 2265-9404

ISSN: 2265-9404

Publisher

Groupeement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art

Printed version

Date of publication: 4 November 2015

ISBN: 1246-8258

ISSN: 1246-8258

Electronic reference

Sophie Cras, « *Prizes and Awards in Contemporary Art: Evaluation and Promotion in a Competitive System* », *Critique d'art* [Online], 45 | 2015, Online since 04 November 2016, connection on 30 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/19146> ; DOI : 10.4000/critiquedart.19146

This text was automatically generated on 30 April 2019.

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- Kunst & Karriere : ein Kaleidoskop des Kunstbetriebs**, Zurich : Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, 2015. Sous la dir. d'Oskar Bätschmann, Regula Krähenbühl
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- Exhibitions Reviews Annual 2014-15**, Londres : Occasional Papers, 2015
- Le Prix Marcel Duchamp 2015 : Davide Belula, Neïl Beloufa, Melik Ohanian, Zineb Sedira**, Milan : Silvana ; Paris : ADIAF, 2015
- Young Belgian Art Prize 2015**, Bruxelles : Bozar ; Tielt : Lannoo, 2015

- 1 The end of summer, in France, marks the return of the literary season. Every year, hundreds of new books vie for the public's attention. Then come the literary prizes—separating them, adjusting and dubbing them, and striving to guide the readers' eyes towards such and such a rising value and the odd overlooked talent.
- 2 The timetable of contemporary art is not unconnected. From the highly legitimate Lion d'Or of the Venice Biennale, awarded this year to Adrian Piper, to the famous Turner

Prize, whose televised broadcast on Britain's Channel 4, delights the gutter press, by way of the most remunerative Hugo Boss Prize, which enabled Paul Chan to walk away with \$100,000 at its latest awards ceremony, the awards are numerous and punctuate the latest national and international art news. For the past 15 years or so, corporate foundations have been at work devising prizes which enhance their image; one just has to think, for example, of the Fondation Ricard Prize, the HSBC Prize for photography, the MAIF Prize for sculpture, and even the Canson Prize for Art and Paper. Institutions are not to be outdone, either; Sciences Po now has its Contemporary Art Prize and even the Villa Medici has decided to bring back the good old days and has been awarding a "New *Prix de Rome*" since 2014.

- 3 In spite of this craze, there is a dearth of analytical works helping towards a better understanding of what these prizes do for, and to, contemporary art. How do they select the artists, and what value judgments are they expressing? What is their impact on careers and on the prices of works? And, above all, how do they *act* on art itself: are they content to sanction existing artwork after the fact, or are they active before the fact helping to fashion output by modifying its possible conditions? In other words, do the prizes evaluate and measure a value or else are they themselves producers of value? A selection of recent and very diverse publications offers a chance to propose certain lines of thinking. Two have resulted from the context of a prize (the Marcel Duchamp Prize and the AICA France Prize for art criticism), the others are research works on the impact of people involved in the art world on present-day creation.
- 4 The prizes awarded to contemporary artists have a long history, which cannot be dissociated from that of the academic system. Up until the latter half of the 19th century, the *Prix de Rome* and the *Prix du Salon* were decisive for artists' careers in an almost monopolistic way.¹ As reflections and guarantees of an official system of values, they were among the first victims of the rejection of that system. So the famous *Salon des Refusés* of 1863 declared itself to be "without jury or awards". However, with the withdrawal of the Academy, private agencies swiftly appropriated the privilege of awarding prizes. The capacity of each one to impose its own reflected the power play existing between the people involved, competing with one another to impose themselves as prescriptors in a field where the judgment criteria were no longer stable or shared. In her study of contemporary art galleries in Paris, Julie Verlaine has thus shown how galleries orchestrated the whole system of awards set up at the Liberation, from the prize for Young Painters controlled by the Drouant-David Gallery, to the prize for Criticism underwritten by the Saint-Placide Gallery, and to the Kandinsky Prize awarding an abstract artist with an exhibition at the Denise René Gallery.² By financing endowments, selecting winners, and exhibiting them, galleries used to control the entire process of self-legitimization through prizes. The current turning point for prizes awarded for contemporary artwork naturally reflects new kinds of power play. It is the heir of what the sociologist Annie Verger has called "the invention of the honours list": a predilection for listings, indexes and other competitions, the origins of which she situates in the latter half of the 1950s.³ It tallies with a twofold challenge. First the internationalization of the art world, considerably steps the competitiveness which abounds in it. Second, the new status of living art as a fully-fledged sector of financial investment, feeds the demand for value measurements beyond individual aesthetic judgment modelled on instruments of performances in the field of sport and business. Since the 1980s, three phenomena have complicated the reading of new prizes for contemporary art: they undermine the

distinctions between national and international, public and private, artistic and extra-artistic.

- 5 The sociologist Alain Quemin has shown the degree to which the internationalization of contemporary art has been compounded by more or less assumed phenomena of “national preference”, determining, to a great degree, artists’ career prospects.⁴ In this regard, prizes are especially meaningful: while being at the heart of a globalized present-day art system many of these prizes determinedly display patriotic ambitions. The Turner Prize, created in 1984 by the Tate Gallery, was a forerunner. By annually rewarding a young British artist, the prize went hand in hand with the success of the hot, sensational London scene.⁵ That success created rivals, and many countries adopted prizes named after a national art hero: the Vincent Award (Netherlands), the Miró Prize (Spain), and, needless to add, in France, the Marcel Duchamp Prize. Created in 2000 by the Association for the International Distribution of French Art [ADIAF], made up of private collectors, the goal of the Marcel Duchamp Prize, according to its president, Gilles Fuchs, is to “provide a wider sphere of influence for the contemporary French art scene [...] of which we are passionate champions, and which has a place apart in the artistic planet”.⁶ Every year, the ADIAF collectors select four French artists or artists living in France, subsequently adjudged by a jury of international experts. The traditional contrast between public and private, incarnated by the historical shift sketched out above, from the academic system to the market, is also rendered obsolete by present-day models. As an outcome of private financing, the Marcel Duchamp Prize thus tacks readily between categories. On the one hand, it offers its winners an exhibition in the Espace 315 at the Centre Pompidou (Julien Prévieux’s show, after winning the prize in 2014, opened on 23 September 2015)—but also, for all the nominees, an exhibition in a regional museum (in 2015, at the Carré d’art in Nîmes). On the other hand, its liaison with the market is nevertheless explicit: until this year, the announcement of the four nominees took place in the Artcurial auction house, the prize’s sponsor, and the announcement of the winner was made during the International Contemporary Art Fair (FIAC). The ADIAF has nevertheless recently announced a new and stronger partnership with the Centre Pompidou from 2016 onward: from that year on, all the nominees will be given an exhibition, and the announcement of the winner will be made at the Museum.⁷ This legitimization of the private sector by the public sector is the mainspring of many prizes such as the one awarded by the Fondation d’Entreprise Ricard, which rewards its winner —also chosen from the French art scene—by the purchase of a work, which is offered to the National Museum of Modern Art and shown at the Centre Pompidou.
- 6 The latest blurring of the boundaries has to do with the distinction between what happens before and after the creation of works, between what issues from the artistic process as such, and what is taken on by the various art world forces (in the sense used by Howard Becker). Present-day prizes are often not content with recognizing and highlighting an already existing production: they involve projects by proposing financing and outlets for new works. Their intent is to offer opportunities, as well as rewards. It is this active role as co-producers played by contemporary art collectors which the economists Nathalie Moureau, Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux and Marion Vidal have highlighted in their recent report made to the Ministry of Culture and Communication, contradicting the idea that a purchase is an end in itself for a work. The matter of prizes is not broached in the report, but the stance taken by it offers a stimulating prospect. Indeed, studies in the field of economics and sociology of art are too often confined to an

analysis of the methods whereby prizes are awarded and to the measurement of the increased visibility and sales of the winner. In such approaches, the prize is considered, above all, for its signal effect.⁸

- 7 The opposite is true of the collective work *Kunst & Karriere*, edited by Oskar Bätschmann and Regula Krähenbühl. Like many conference proceedings, it suffers from a marked heterogeneity, which barely offers more than a “kaleidoscopic” entry into the field of “career studies” (*Karriereforschung*), it mixes the histories of collectors and collections, the history of reception and contemporary approaches to careers and markets. However this book has the particular feature of focusing on the active role of artists themselves in their dialogue with the “art establishment” (*Kunstbetriebs*). Here again, no chapter is specifically devoted to the matter of prizes, but this subject is at times discussed in an illuminating way. So in his article about Tracey Emin, Peter J. Schneemann suggests that the nomination of the British artist for the Turner Prize in 1999, which caused a scandal, should not be understood either as the confiscation of contemporary art by an “elitist mafia” of alleged experts establishing and setting up at will artists who are ever more shocking, nor as a cynical strategy on the part of an artist using the instruments of the system to her own ends, but as an artistic approach as such. For Emin, the Turner Prize was thus a new stage in the development in the institutional and media sphere of a multifaceted practice, just as the auction sale of *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever* was for Damien Hirst in 2008. Prizes are thus—and this is another of their challenges which calls for considerable further analysis—creative areas of encounter between artists and “non-artists”. Although the great majority of awards is officially attributed to artists, the candidacy process is usually a task jointly involving exhibition curators, art critics, museum curators and art historians. In this way, each nominee for the Marcel Duchamp Prize is invited to choose a “reporter/*rapporteur*” to champion him or her, publishing as a “twosome” with the artist.⁹
- 8 With regard to all these points, the book edited by Marc Lenot, winner of the 2014 AICA France Prize, titled *Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza : fragments liminaires* and accompanying this artist’s exhibition at the Ile de France Photographic Centre in 2015, offers a surprisingly reflexive way of looking at things. The trilingual and generously illustrated book highlights the second awarding of the prize, given each year to a member of the French section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA)¹⁰. For this competition, each critic presents an artist of his or her choice, in a short format of 6’40” and 20 images (based on the so-called *Pechakucha*). The national dimension is clearly present in this prize “promoting art criticism in France”, but its winner, Marc Lenot, certainly questions it. By presenting a woman artist born in Ecuador and working in Paris, whose works strive to produce a “tongue in cheek” exoticism, not only about France but also about her own country, the work belies the idea of a *French* art as well as that of a *French way of looking at art*. Looking at things is, indeed, what the book is all about. In the collaboration between an artist who erases, retrieves, and disappears--“the first piece by Estefanía Peñafiel L. which I saw, I did not see”, said Lenot in his presentation for the prize¹¹--, and a critic, whose brief is precisely to show the visibility and invisibility of the work, link up together. The book and the show were devised by the two of them as “a set of *fragments liminaires* [prefatory fragments], on the threshold of their future promises”.¹² The prize thus becomes not the reward for a deserving accomplishment but the terrain where a new work is prepared, closely associating artist, critic, and accommodating institution.

- 9 Prizes offer a chance for contemporary art when, without being content to contribute through a signal effect to the sociological construction of market values and prices, they enrich the praxes of artists through funding and encounters. So it would be not only futile, but even destructive to expect one prize to dominate all the others, in order to impose itself as an indisputable pledge of quality. The diversity of prizes, on the contrary, reflects the wholesome multiplicity of expectations to do with present-day artwork. We can only wish that an ever greater transparency (to do with their methods of attribution and their underlying judgment criteria), will permit everyone to grant these prizes the importance which they deserve.
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NOTES

1. See in particular: Sfeir-Semler, Andrée. *Die Maler am Pariser Salon, 1791-1880*, Frankfurt : Campus Verlag ; Paris : Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1992
2. Verlaine, Julie. *Les Galeries d'art contemporain à Paris : une histoire culturelle du marché de l'art, 1944-1970*, Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012, p.176-178
3. Verger, Annie. "L'art d'estimer l'art. Comment classer l'incomparable ?", *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, vol. 66, n°1, 1987, p.107. This ground-breaking study was recently extended by Alain Quemin in his book: *Les Stars de l'art contemporain : notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*, Paris : CNRS publishers, 2013, which, sadly, does not tackle the use of contemporary art prizes head-on, either.
4. This line of thinking is adopted in several books, starting with the study: *Le Rôle des pays prescripteurs sur le marché et dans le monde de l'art contemporain*, Paris : Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 2001.
5. A complete history of the prize, with a great deal of testimony from winners, is available in the excellent book *The Turner Prize and British Art*, London: Tate Publishing, 2007.
6. *Le Prix Marcel Duchamp 2015*, Milan : Silvana ; Paris : ADIAF, 2015, p. 8
7. "Prix Marcel Duchamp : Un nouvel élan entre l'ADIAF et le Centre Pompidou", press conference of 9 December, 2014.
8. See : Pénet, Pierre, Lee, Kangsan, "Prize & price : The Turner Prize as a valuation device in the contemporary art market", *Poetics*, vol. 43, 2014 ; Ginsburgh, Victor A., Van Ours, Jan C. "Expert Opinion and Compensation : Evidence from a Musical Competition", *American Economic Review*, n° 93, 2003, p. 289-298 ; the complete dossier in the *Journal des Arts*, n°385, 15 February 2013, recently complemented by the article by Julie Anne, Marine Bernier and Roxane Girel, edited by Nathalie Moureau, "Les prix Ricard et Marcel Duchamp influent-ils sur l'entrée des œuvres dans les collections publiques ?", *Le Journal des Arts*, n°431, 13 March 2015
9. Let us note, fyi, that between 2000 and 2015, women represented less than one fifth of the nominated artists, and barely one quarter of the *rapporteurs*.
10. This prize is symptomatic of a system of competitions, contests and awards which now extends not only to artists, but also to art critics, and whose first presentation of the "International Awards for Art Criticism", in Shanghai in 2014, shows its development and internationalization. See: *Exhibition Reviews Annual 2014-15. A selection of the best entries from the first International Awards for Art Criticism*, London and Shanghai: Occasional Papers et International Awards for Art Criticism Ltd., 2014.

11. Published under the title : “Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza. More than one person...“, in *Art press*, n° 412, p. 92-93.

12. *Estefanía Peñafiel Loaiza : fragments liminaires*, (edited by Marc Lenot), Dijon : Les Presses du réel, 2015, p. 12